An Evaluation of Five Grape Rootstocks suitable for Marlborough Vineyards

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Poster Abstract

The increased demand for Marlborough wine over the past two decades has resulted in vineyards being established in areas that were previously considered less desirable for growing grapes. During this fast initial development the most suitable rootstocks were not always used. As the industry continues to mature, many of the older vineyards on the traditional growing areas on the Wairau Plains are now being replanted. This gives growers an opportunity to select rootstock scion combinations best suited to the vineyard environment and their needs. In anticipation of these requirements, five different rootstocks were grafted to Sauvignon blanc in 1991 for the evaluation of grapevine physiology and juice composition. As the vines matured, the initial differences yield resulting from the rootstock treatments lessened until more recently there was little or no impact of rootstock on bunch number and fruit yield at harvest. However, observations on mature plants during the last five years showed that the choice of rootstock affected early bud development and canopy vigour. Rootstocks also had an impact on berry size at harvest and juice composition, specifically soluble solids and titratable acidity. The differences in soluble solids/TA ratio are likely to have an impact on wine quality. The long-term evaluation of these rootstocks has shown there are consistencies and trends developing that can help growers select the best rootstock for their needs. The differences observed between the five rootstocks influenced vine performance and fruit composition and can therefore have an impact on wine quality.